

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, IN, PK
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EMBASSY JUSTIFIES BHUTTO VERDICT

1. PAKISTAN CHARGE, SHAHID AMIN, BRIEFED INDIAN JOURNALISTS MARCH 31 AND THE FOREIGN PRESS CORPS APRIL 1, ON THE BHUTTA TRIAL AND ITS AFTERMATH, HANDING OUT COPIES OF THE LAHORE HIGH COURT'S JUDGMENT AND, WE UNDERSTAND, SEEKING TO GET ACROSS THE IDEA THAT THE TRIAL WAS A FAIR ONE CONDUCTED BY AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY. HAVING DEFENDED THE GOP'S HANDLING OF THE CASE, AMIN SHIFTED TO THE OFFENSIVE, TELLING THE JOURNALISTS THAT OUTSIDERS SHOULD NOT INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES. HE THOUGHT THAT CRITICISM OF A COUNTRY'S JUDICIARY MIGHT WELL BE LABELED INTERFERENCE. HE ALSO CHALLENGED THE FALSE ASSUMPTION THAT JUSTICE
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WAS A MONOPOLY OF THE BRITISH STYLE PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY. PAKISTAN'S SUPREME COURT WAS FREE AND WOULD EXERCISE ITS INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT; THE WORLD SHOULD WAIT FOR ITS RULING BEFORE PRESSURING PAKISTAN TO PARDON BHUTTO.

2. TURNING TO THE INDIAN SCENE, AMIN APPRECIATE

THE GOI'S "CORRECT ATTITUDE"; THE GOP HAD ASSUMED A SIMILAR ATTITUDE TOWARD EVENTS IN INDIA. THEN, NOTING "IRRESPONSIBLE" COMMENTS AND "EXAGGERATIONS" IN INDIAN NEWSPAPERS, AMIN WARNED THAT "NEGATIVE" WRITINGS AND INSINUATIONS THAT PAKISTAN'S JUDICIARY WAS NOT FREE CONSTITUTED A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO CREATE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AMONG THE PEOPLE IN PAKISTAN; THIS COULD AFFECT RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN.

3. A "TIMES OF INDIA" REPORTER WROTE ON APRIL 1 THAT A "WELL-ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN TO JUSTIFY THE DEATH SENTENCE PASSED...ON MR. BHUTTO HAS BEEN LAUNCHED BY THE PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS ABROAD." WE UNDERSTAND THAT IQBAL BHATTN DIRECTOR OF EXTENAL PUBLICITY FOR THE GOP FOREIGN MINISTRY, HAS COME TO TOWN AS PART OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE A MAJOR EFFORT TO INFLUENCE DELHI'S LARGE FOREIGN PRESS CORPS, MANY OF WHOSE MEMBERS ALSO COVER PAKISTAN.

4. THE DELHI PRESS HAS SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO STOP TALKING ABOUT THE BHUTTA CASE. EDITORIALS APPEARING AFTER AMIN'S BRIEFING, LIKE THOSE APPEARING BEFORE, HAVE TENDED TO DISCUSS NOT THE JUSTICE OF THE COURT'S VERDICT BUT RATHER WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF EXECUTING BHUTTA MIGHT BE FOR PAKISTAN. THE ONLY LOCAL PAPER TO DISCUSS EDITORIALY THE EMBASSY'S BREIFING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAS THE CONGRESS-I'S "NATIONAL HERALD", WHICH THOUGHT THAT A SUPREME COURT RULING IN BHUTTO'S FAVOR WOULD AVERT A "DISMAL CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN." IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE PAPER WROTE, "AN APPEAL TO SAVE THE LIFE OF MR. BHUTTO IS NOT AT ALL AN UNFRIENDLY ACT TOWARDS PAKISTAN."

5. THE GOI HAS CONTINUED TO AVOID ANY COMMENT ON THE LAHORE HIGH COURT'S VERDICT OR TO ENGAGE IN ANY SPECULATION ABOUT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS. WE ARE TOLD BY THE RESPONSIBLE MEA OFFICIAL THAT THE GOI HAS MADE NO PRIVATE APPROACH TO THE GOP ON THE AFFAIR. GOHEEN

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